

## Dr. Brian Cole & Dr. Anthony Romeo: 3 Ways to Be an Orthopedic Leader

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Last month *Orthopedics This Week* [named](#) its 28 Top North American Shoulder Surgeons, including Brian Cole, MD, and Anthony Romeo, MD.

Dr. Cole and Dr. Romeo are both orthopedic surgeons at Midwest Orthopaedics at Rush in Chicago. Dr. Cole is the head of the Cartilage Restoration Center at Rush University Medical Center. Dr. Romeo is the director in the section of shoulder and elbow at Rush.

Dr. Romeo and Dr. Cole discussed the ways orthopedic surgeons can get involved as leaders in the industry.

There are a number of components to leadership, Dr. Romeo says. First, there is a desire to know as much as possible about an area of intended expertise and to have the energy to pursue that. Leadership is a devotion to a profession. Another component is the creativity or innovation.

"To be a leader you want to be recognized as a problem solver," he says. "Leaders need not only a great educational foundation from one of the leaders in the field, but also the pure desire to educate yourself and others. We learn so much by teaching others. Having the opportunity to work with residents, fellows and other surgeons has helped me to learn more about my profession."

Here are three of their main leadership components.

**1. Research.** Research plays out into two parts, Dr. Romeo says, and allows physicians to go from challenges to innovative solutions.

"One is the problem solving aspect," Dr. Romeo says. "We are faced with many challenges. When we run into a problem we define it and set up a method to try to study the problem. Based on the results, we come up with a plan and thoughts for the future."

Dr. Romeo is engaged in several current research trials right now. For one, he and his team are looking at baseball players with Tommy John injuries in their elbows. They are studying a player's pitching ability prior to having the operation designed by Frank Jobe, MD, as well as James Andrews, MD, and others. The researchers then compare the results with after the surgery to see if they can return to the same level of play.

"We've found in general they come back at the same level and even better," Dr. Romeo says. "Statistics suggest after surgery they do even better than when they were struggling with symptoms."

Dr. Cole is participating in about 40 studies right now. He and his team members are looking at finding an alternative to joint replacement for young patients with arthritis. Such techniques could include replacing bone and cartilage in the shoulder.

"Much of our current research lies with patients who have shoulder instability or structural problems that we can restore," Dr. Cole says. "We are also looking at biologics to improve the body's ability to heal above and beyond what it would do normally."

Dr. Cole encourages orthopedic surgeons looking to further contribute to industry research to start simple and build from there.

"My advice is taking a few simple ideas for research that are doable and having the diligence and energy to bring these costs to fruition in a timely way," he says. "Getting involved in teaching is paramount to the process. We have plenty of opportunities through subspecialty societies for young people to teach others by giving lectures and working in labs."

**2. Professional societies.** Being involved in orthopedic organizations — such as the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine, American Shoulder and Elbow Surgeons and more — can help a physician network and make a difference among his or her peers.

"You need to be active on the podium and involved with societies and meetings where you or the group you are working with as a team is presenting research so your programs are visible," Dr. Cole says.

Activity in societies not only benefits individuals, but it benefits orthopedic surgery on the whole.

"We are able to get together with our peers to share idea as to how we conduct our profession," Dr. Romeo says. "Our skills within a group setting help move forward the progress of our profession. It's valuable to stay an active member of societies pertinent to your practice."

**3. Teamwork.** Both men acknowledge that teamwork among other driven orthopedic surgeons is the only way to succeed as a leader.

"My recognition [through this award] is really a culmination of 20 years of passion for shoulder surgery that has been blended together with an incredible group of partners, fellows and residents at our program at Rush that has allowed me to achieve the level I achieved," Dr. Romeo says. "I never would have done certain things or participated in others without the teamwork at Rush."

Dr. Cole also tries to impress upon those residents and students he's working with that teamwork is vital.

"When mentoring people, a lot of it is emphasizing your work within the context of a team," he says. "No individual is successful without a good team behind them."